

NIH POLICY MANUAL

2300-410-5 - NIH Stride Program

Issuing Office: NIH Training Center, OSMP, OD, 301-496-6211

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1. **Explanation of Material Transmitted:** This chapter updates policies and procedures associated with the NIH STRIDE PROGRAM.

** Note: Partial revisions were made 8/4/04 in Sections D, F, G, J, L, M and Appendix 1 to reflect revised organizational references.*

2. **Filing Instructions:**

Remove: NIH Manual 2300-410-5 dated 9/29/98

Insert: NIH Manual 2300-410-5 dated 3/28/03

PLEASE NOTE: For information on:

- Content of this chapter, contact the issuing office listed above.
- NIH Manual System, contact the Division of Management Services, OMA on 301-496-2832, or enter this URL: <http://www1.od.nih.gov/oma/manualchapters>.

A. Purpose and Scope:

The STRIDE Program, a component of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Career Opportunities Program, is established to help meet the staffing needs of the NIH and to provide NIH employees with an opportunity for career change and advancement. STRIDE provides a combination of on-the-job training, academic courses, and selected short courses to prepare individuals for positions identified by the Institutes and Centers (ICs) of the NIH. The target positions are "lines of work properly classified at two-grade intervals." (See examples of target occupations for STRIDE training in the Appendix.) STRIDE Interns are selected competitively according to the HHS Career Opportunities Training Agreement (COTA) and the NIH Merit Promotion Plan (MPP). The maximum length of the training period is three years.

This career development program also supports NIH Equal Opportunity and Diversity Program goals by enhancing the career potential of minority, female and disabled employees.

who have been traditionally underrepresented in the two-grade interval series.

B. References:

1. The HHS COTA, transmitted by the Office of the Secretary of DHSS on 1/15/85, contains detailed requirements related to selection and training of employees for career opportunities.
2. [NIH Manual 2300-335-1](#), NIH Merit Promotion Plan (MPP), describes the merit promotion process used in the competitive selection of employees for career opportunities.

C. Definitions:

1. **Career Development Plan (CDP)** - A career development plan describes the combinations of on-the-job experience, academic course work, and short courses that prepare the Intern for the target position.
2. **Target Position** - The position to be filled by the Intern upon completion of the STRIDE Program.
3. **Training Position** - The position in which the Intern receives the work experience and training to prepare him/her for the target position.

D. Responsibilities:

This section describes the principal responsibilities of each party. Responsibilities may overlap and involve cooperation among the parties.

1. **Technical Advisory Board (TAB):** The TAB, which consists of senior level IC managers, provides oversight for the STRIDE Program through development of policy and procedures as well as implementation and operation of the Program.
2. **NIH Training Center (NIHTC), Office of Strategic Management Planning (OSMP), Office of the Director (OD) :** The NIHTC provides staff support to the TAB in the development and implementation of policy and procedures for STRIDE, in the conduct of the TAB meetings and in the day-to-day management of the STRIDE program. A designated STRIDE Program Manager provides this support.
3. **The IC:** (a) identifies target positions and training supervisors; (b) establishes position descriptions for Intern and Target positions, including career ladder PDs; (c) develops the rating criteria; (d) makes the selection; (e) submits completed CDP copies to the STRIDE Program Manager for review and filing in each Intern's Training file; and (f) prepares and submits all personnel actions.
4. **Supervisor:** (a) works with NIHTC to develop position descriptions; (b) serves as

the selecting official; (c) ensures that Intern's CDP reflects the knowledge, skills and abilities and training required for the target position; (d) evaluates the STRIDE Intern's performance; (e) recommends the Intern for awards and promotions as performance and CDP requirements are met; and (f) recommends the Intern for placement into the target position as performance and CDP requirements are met.

5. **STRIDE Intern:** (a) signs the NIH STRIDE Program Agreement; (b) participates in the development of the CDP and complies with the training and educational requirements, as described in the CDP; (c) prepares and submits training requests through the training supervisor to the STRIDE Program Manager for appropriate approval signatures; (d) provides the STRIDE Program Manager with a copy of his/her academic transcript (including grades) at the end of each semester; (e) fulfills training payback requirements, as specified in the Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 410.309(b) and (c), if necessary; and (f) complies with performance standards and submits STRIDE evaluation forms to the STRIDE Program Manager within the established time frame to ensure assignments meet the training objective.

E. Program Eligibility Requirements:

To be eligible to apply for positions announced under the provisions of the NIH STRIDE Program, an applicant must meet **all** requirements below:

1. be employed at NIH in a career or career-conditional appointment for at least one year prior to the closing date of the announcement, and be willing to assume full-time status;
2. apply for STRIDE positions in ICs other than that in which currently employed;
3. be employed in a one-grade interval job series in the General Schedule (GS) or the Federal Wage Grade (WG);
4. possess a high school diploma or the General Education Development certificate of equivalency and **not** hold a bachelor's degree; and
5. be employed at the grade level at which the positions are announced (GS-5, 6, or 7) or be willing to accept a voluntary downgrade to the maximum grade level announced. There are **no** promotions into the program. Employees accepting a downgrade are eligible for pay retention.

F. Recruitment and Selection Procedures:

1. The recruitment and selection process begins when the NIHTC solicits requests from the ICs for STRIDE training positions. After review, the TAB decides which requests will best meet the STRIDE purpose and scope.

2. The ICs announce the positions, evaluate applications, and recommend selections in accordance with the NIH Merit Protection Program.
3. TAB has final approval authority for all selections.

G. Career Development Plan (CDP):

1. **The CDP:** Each Intern works with the supervisor and other appropriate officials on the development of the CDP within 30 days of selection. The length of training will be determined based on the Intern's qualifications compared to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) qualification requirements of the target position. The CDP will be reviewed and signed by the Intern, supervisor, NIHTC, and the STRIDE Program Manager. A copy of the signed CDP should be provided to the STRIDE Program Manager. The CDP will be reviewed by the TAB for concurrence. The plan is open to revision to enhance better achievement of STRIDE objectives and Intern progress.
2. **Undergraduate Academic and Non-Academic Training:** STRIDE supports only undergraduate academic training up to 30 credit hours; graduate level training is not supported. While the training may incidentally meet degree requirements, obtaining the degree is neither a requirement of the target position nor an objective of this Program. Courses must be directly related to the target career field. Generally, the Intern will take academic courses on his/her own time; however, exceptions may be made by the training supervisor. The allowances of duty hours for this training are the responsibility of the training IC and follow the IC's standard training policies and procedures. All non-academic training will be subject to the availability of funds; ICs may supplement training as appropriate.

H. Career Development Evaluation:

1. As required by the HHS COTA, the supervisor must evaluate the Intern's progress every **three** months. Semi-annual progress reviews and an annual performance appraisal must be done in accordance with the NIH Performance Appraisal Program.
2. The Intern must maintain an appraisal of "acceptable" according to the NIH Performance Appraisal Program to continue in the STRIDE Program.

I. Career Advancement and Placement:

Promotions During Training Period: The CDP describes promotion opportunities between the Intern's entry into the program and his/her graduation into the target position. Interns may be promoted after 90 days in training status when:

1. The promotion is to a **technical position** (i.e., a one-grade interval series position) **at or below** the level of the **target position** as established by the supervisor;

2. The training assignment is at least one year in duration;
3. The Intern is qualified for an interim technical position while in training;
4. The interim technical position is supportable by the appropriate OPM classification and qualification standards;
5. The Intern is recommended for promotion by the training supervisor; and
6. The Intern satisfies OPM time-in-grade requirements for promotion.

J. Program Completion:

Although OPM qualification requirements are waived for initial entry into a new career field, all Interns must meet OPM qualifications, as modified by the HHS COTA, for their target positions.

1. Credit total time spent in training as qualifying experience up to a maximum of **one** month of training for **two** months of qualifying experience. For example, if an Intern needs one year of specialized experience to meet the OPM requirements for the target position, then the requirements may be met in six months.
2. If at any point in the training period there is an indication, as evidenced by the supervisory evaluations or performance in training courses, that trainees are not performing satisfactorily **and** will be unable to move into target positions, the trainees' supervisor, the NIHTC, and the Stride Program Manager in consultation with the Technical Advisory Board shall consider (1) reassigning employees to non-training positions; or (2) extending employees' training period.
3. A Certification of Completion Memo will be signed by the supervisor, the NIHTC, and the STRIDE Program Manager to document that the Intern has successfully completed all experience and training requirements of his/her CDP and meets all OPM qualification requirements for the target position.

K. Records Retention and Disposal:

All records (e-mail and non-e-mail) pertaining to this chapter must be retained and disposed of under the authority of NIH Manual [1743](#), "Keeping and Destroying Records, Appendix 1, NIH Records Control Schedule" Item 2300-300-3.

NIH e-mail messages (messages, including attachments, that are created on NIH computer systems or transmitted over NIH networks) that are evidence of the activities of the agency or have informational value are considered Federal records. These records must be maintained in accordance with current NIH Records Management guidelines. Contact your IC Records Officer for additional information.

All e-mail messages are considered Government property, and, if requested for a legitimate Government purpose, must be provided to the requester. Employees' supervisors, NIH staff conducting official reviews or investigations, and the Office of Inspector General may request access to or copies of the e-mail messages. E-mail messages must also be provided to members of Congress or Congressional committees, if requested, and are subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. Since most e-mail systems have back-up files that are sometimes retained for significant periods of time, e-mail messages and attachments may be retrievable from a back-up file after they have been deleted from an individual's computer. The back-up files are subject to the same requests as the original messages.

L. Management Controls:

The purpose of this manual issuance is to provide the NIH policies and procedures of the STRIDE Program.

1. The office responsible for reviewing management controls relative to this Chapter is the NIHTC, Office of the Director, NIH. Through this issuance, the NIHTC is accountable for the method used to ensure that management controls are implemented and working.
2. Frequency of Review: As necessary, but at a minimum, every 5 years.
3. Method of Review: The NIHTC is responsible for developing and writing policy. The TAB, STRIDE Program Manager, and NIHTC ensure compliance of the STRIDE Program with stated program policies and procedures.
4. Review reports are sent to the Deputy Director for Management, NIH.

M. Additional Information:

For more information on the STRIDE Program, go to:
<http://learningsource.od.nih.gov/stride.htm>.

Appendix 1. Examples of NIH Target Occupations Selected for STRIDE Training:

Series	Title
0201	Human Resource Specialist
0260	Equal Employment Specialist
0301	Committee Management Specialist
2210	Information Technology (IT) Specialist
0341	Administrative Officer
0343	Management Analyst
0560	Budget Analyst
1035	Public Affairs Specialist

1035	Public Affairs Specialist
1082	Writer-Editor
1101	Grants Management Specialist
1102	Contract Specialist/Procurement Analyst*

*This occupational series includes the following positive educational requirement:

A 4-year course of study leading to a bachelor's degree with a major in any field;

OR

At least 24 semester hours in any combination of the following fields:
accounting, business, finance, law, contracts, purchasing, economics,
industrial management, marketing, quantitative methods, or organization and
management.